



Employee News

December 2003/January 2004

News and Information for Families of individuals at Muscatatuck SDC and Madison State Hospital during the transition to community-based services.



Letter to The Indianapolis Star from Cheryl Sullivan, Secretary of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration

I read with interest the recent column of Andrea Neal suggesting we "close down" the Family and Social Services Administration and start over.

Thanks for your suggestion, but I have a better idea – let's stop pointing fingers. That will never produce the best system for Hoosier children, families and seniors. This administration wants to fix what needs fixing, but let's not turn out the lights just yet.

You ask "why is FSSA so big?" I have a better question: "How many Hoosiers does FSSA serve?"

The answer to both questions: FSSA helps nearly a million people every year. That's about one out of every six people in Indiana.

Look at your own family, your neighbors, your co-workers. Chances are, you'll find someone helped by FSSA. It may be a senior who can now afford prescriptions because of Hoosier Rx; a working family getting help putting dinner on the table from food stamps; or a young child who gets checkups because of Hoosier Healthwise.

It doesn't make sense to tell one million

Hoosiers to go to three, or four, or more different agencies, simply because it may be easier for administrators to manage.

What would you get with multiple government offices instead of one central agency? Four human resources departments, four cabinet secretaries and four sets of advocates arguing for a piece of the pie. You'd get funding firewalls and "us v. them" thinking and four sets of priorities.

And most regretfully, people who need our help would have to find and go through four different doors.

Here's what FSSA does by virtue of its combined functions. That mother who's working two jobs? She can get food stamps and Hoosier Healthwise for her children at the same office. Or what about a person with a disability? Because FSSA's divisions work together, people can remain part of a community, not an institution, through programs that combine the efforts of Medicaid, the Division of Disability, Aging and Rehabilitative Services and the Division of Mental Health and Addiction.

And don't forget partnerships with other agencies -- the Department of Workforce Development helps us provide job training; the Department of Education helps us serve troubled children; and with the Indiana State Department of Health, FSSA launched a visionary new program to help Medicaid patients manage chronic conditions like

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Update - Governor's Commission on Home and Community-Based Services

The Governor's Commission on Home and Community-Based Services was created by Executive Order in July 2002. Its purposes included developing the following three strategies: 1.) To expand community capacity, 2.) To eliminate barriers to service, and 3.) To develop systems that support consumer-directed care.

In December 2002, the Commission forwarded an Interim Report to the late Governor Frank O'Bannon. This report

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included 16 recommendations with the assignment of responsibility by agency.

Part of the Commission's interest area also included support for mini-grants that were granted by FSSA. These grants were designed to support the Commission's purpose and to create opportunities

for community coordination and integration of services. Once completed, the grant outcomes are expected to yield best practices, innovation and opportunities for replication.

In June 2003, the Commission forwarded a second report to the Governor. The report contained 28 actions that were viewed as critical to the focus and purpose of the Commission to shift the system of care from institutional care to community-based care. The actions again had agency responsibility defined. It is the belief of the Commission that it will take resources from many different agencies to fully realize the goal of

Tips for Managing Holiday Stress

People often face more stress and may be at a greater risk for depression during the holidays. But the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration wishes everyone a happy and joyous holiday season and offers tips for managing holiday stress.

1) Plan ahead. Planning can help you manage the stress that often comes with balancing an already full schedule. "It may sound simple, but making a list and marking what you must do and what you would like to accomplish can be enlightening," said Suzanne Clifford, director of FSSA's Division of Mental Health and Addiction.

2) Ask for help. "Someone attending your holiday dinner may be happy to bake that special family favorite that has been handed down over the generations," Clifford said.

3) Keep things simple. This can go a long way to head off stress. "Paper plates, cups and plastic utensils make clean up a snap and provide more time to relax and visit with those you care about. Deciding on a limited menu can also keep stress at bay and make the day more enjoyable," Clifford said.

4) Take care of your self. Eat right, exercise, get plenty of rest and stick to your pre-determined budget. "To be wise and head off added stress, don't drink too much alcohol, eat too much, place too much emphasis on any one day or spend money you do not have," said Dr. Alan D. Schmetzer, newly appointed superintendent at Larue D. Carter Memorial Hospital in Indianapolis.

5) Set realistic expectations and keep your sense of humor. This can keep you from feeling disappointed. It's normal to feel a little down after the holiday rush. "If you don't feel better after returning to your regular schedule, you may benefit from talking to a trained professional," said Schmetzer.

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Message From Nikki Morrell

Construction of the Southeast Regional Center is progressing, even as we face cold, wintry weather in Madison. Each Thursday morning Gerald Barnes and Angie Lobb, who are coordinating the project for FSSA and DMHA, present slides of the latest activities to anyone interested, in the conference room at Madison State Hospital. Photographs are often included in Madison State Hospital's weekly newsletter, and are broadcast on closed circuit television. Selection of fabrics, furniture, and other items continues as well.

It is very satisfying to have so many people involved in this process. I had never grasped how detailed design of buildings and programs could be!

(Update-Governor's Commission, continued from page 2)

having community services available to all Hoosiers who choose to live close to their loved ones in an environment that supports their personal, vocational, recreational as well as their housing and transportation needs.

The Commission will have its final meeting in December to review the status of the mini-grants, to hear what the state has accomplished with the recommendations (outlined in both the December and the June reports), and to understand the state's response to legislation that supports expansion of community-based services.

Information, reports and meeting materials on the Governor's Commission on Home and Community-Based Services may be found at www.in.gov/fssa/community.

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asthma, diabetes and heart disease. With four separate FSSAs, these partnerships would be four times more challenging.

FSSA employees make extraordinarily hard decisions every day, and sometimes, they make honest mistakes. We want to learn from them. Some jobs are incredibly hard. I am grateful for staff who spend hours working with family members to identify services to enable an aging parent to live in her own home. I am thankful that there are child protection caseworkers willing to knock on a stranger's door, knowing they may enter a dangerous situation, but willing to do so to protect a child.

I wish our child protective services office was out of business. But as long as adults abuse children, we'll stay on the job. I would ask you to focus on stopping abusers with the same intensity you focus on caseworkers.

And yes, sometimes, one of our 9,700 employees may commit a very wrong act. Hoosiers should be angry when that happens. If you want to meet the angriest Hoosiers of all, I'll introduce you to them – they work right here at FSSA. The thought that a co-worker may abuse the trust placed in us is infuriating to those who came here to make a difference.

That's why FSSA is here. That's why FSSA is so big.

It's unfortunate we see only the few negative stories. At FSSA, we see the hundreds of thousands of positive ones every day. So don't close down FSSA and start over. Let's work together to make services for the most vulnerable even better. I have a million reasons why you should.



Keep In Mind

Indiana Protection & Advocacy Services

317-722-5555 or

1-800-622-4845

Div. of Disability, Aging & Rehab
Services:

800-545-7763

Div. of Mental Health & Addiction:

800-901-1133

MSDC/MSH Info Hot Line:

800-903-9822

Ombudsman:

800-622-4484

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Future Issues

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- ♦ Your Ideas

"The future belongs to those who believe
in the beauty of their dreams."

Eleanor Roosevelt

State of Indiana
Family and Social Services Administration
402 W. Washington St., P.O. Box 7083
Indianapolis, IN 46207-7083

Name
Address
City, State, Zip